



WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

www.washtenaw.org/preservation

MEETING AGENDA

DATE: Thursday, May 2, 2024
TIME: 5:30 pm – 7:00pm
PLACE: Eastern County Government Center
Office of Community & Economic Development – 2nd Floor
415 W. Michigan Avenue, Ypsilanti, MI

Call to Order– Chair

Roll Call – Secretary

Approval of the Agenda of the Current Meeting – Chair

Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meeting 4/4/2024– Chair

Public Comment

Items for Consideration

- Groves Farm Study Committee Nominations
- Letter of Support for HB5430

Business and Reports

- **Staff Report**
 - o Local Historic Districts Updates: property sales
 - o Groves Farm Staff visit
 - o Northfield Township MPDF CLG Grant
 - o Ordinance updates
 - o Awards announcement draft
- **Treasurer Report**

Items for Discussion

- Commissioner Updates

Adjournment

Next Meeting: Thursday June 6, 2024 - Washtenaw County Eastern County Government Center

Attachments:

April 4, 2024 Meeting Minutes- Draft
Drafted Letter of Support for HB5430
Staff Report
Awards Notification Draft

**Washtenaw County Historic District Commission
Meeting Minutes**

DATE:	Thursday, April 4, 2024
TIME:	5:30 pm-7:00 pm
PLACE	Eastern County Government Center Office of Community & Economic Development- 2 nd floor 415 W. Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti, MI

Call to Order

- Vice Chair Jerome called the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission meeting to order at 5:46 pm.

Roll Call

- Secretary Smith conducted roll call:
 - **Commissioners present:** Alice Ralph, Kim Clarke, James Mann, Alec Jerome, Katie Remensnyder, Angela Oehrli
 - **Commissioners absent:** Dena Rapley, Anne Stevenson, Peter Kelley
 - **Staff present:** Kat Slocum, Sarah Pounders

Approval of the Agenda of the Current Meeting:

Vice Chair Jerome asked if there were any corrections to the agenda. There were none. Commissioner Mann moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Remensnyder seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meeting: January 4, 2024:

Vice Chair Jerome asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. There were none. Commissioner Clarke moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Oehrli seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Citizen Participation: none

Commissioner follow-up to citizen participation: none

Agenda modification:

Vice Chair Jerome requested to move Items for Consideration after Business and Reports due to Chair Ralph's anticipated late arrival. Commissioners unanimously agreed to have staff present the Staff Report first.

Business and Reports:

Staff Report

Staff updated the Commission on the following items:

- Local Historic Districts
 - Staff shared that they are working on affidavits for the remaining LHDs, and how they are moving forward with current affidavits. Staff reviewed the two LHDs that are up for sale, and the connections being made with realtors. Commissioners expressed excitement at the prospect of the properties selling quickly.
 - Staff shared that there is no update from Thornoaks.
 - Staff asked for advice on what types of projects could be constructed on LHD Merriman Farm.

Commissioner Remensnyder shared that building a metal structure, away from LHD buildings made of metal, would differentiate it as not historic. Vice Chair Jerome suggested that new buildings need enough separation from the complex of the historic structures and must use existing building morphology and read as new ancillary property. Staff shared that the potential buyers want to conduct historically appropriate updates to the existing structures.

- Staff shared that Wild Frey Farm is for sale, and prospective buyers are interested. Staff is in communication with the realtor listing the property.
- Groves Farm Preliminary Application for Local Historic District
 - Staff shared the conditions that allowed for advancement of LHDs being welcomed into Northfield Township.
 - Staff shared that Groves Farm is certified by the National Register of Historic Places and that application content can be used towards its LHD application, reducing the time for submitting the study committee report. SHPO also shared feedback on submitting a LHD application using NRHP content.
- Northfield Township MPDF CLG Grant
 - Staff shared that the grant is well underway. Commissioner Remensnyder gave feedback on the first submission, a bibliography, and staff reviewed the first NRHP application's first draft.
- Ordinance updates
 - Ordinance updates were made when the previous HP Specialist was in the role. They were mostly procedural updates, and additional legal language was added. Staff hopes to present updated ordinances during the next meeting.
- HDC Outreach Planning
 - In January 2024, HDC Commissioners chose to make enhanced outreach a goal for 2024, with one suggestion to bring back HDC Awards to showcase historic preservation work in Washtenaw County. Staff presented suggested language detailing possible award types.
 - Commissioner Rapley shared feedback via email suggesting that awards should recognize individuals who do preservation work but don't necessarily own a historic property. Chair Ralph asked for an example. Chair Ralph shared that in the past, HDC members gave award presentations at the Board of Commissioners meetings. Chair Ralph suggested the developer role be an award category. Vice Chair Jerome noted that it is important to do realtor outreach, to engage them in the reasoning for LHDs, and to inform potential buyers about the local historic districts and the HDC.
 - Staff shared that HP now has a realtor packet that is given to realtors who list HDC properties.
 - Staff noted that potential buyers are given some information on the tax credit.
 - Staff suggested publicizing the awards online, in print, and on social media. Staff asked the HDC to consider the mechanism for giving out the awards. The Board of Commissioners meeting was used in the past. Staff wonders if there is another public venue to use.
 - Vice Chair Jerome suggested grammar edits to the awards document (*has endorsed *or surrounding area). Commissioner Oehrli asked if the Outstanding Organization category should only include "nonprofit organizations" and asked for clarity on the types of organizations to include in the nominations. Staff suggested that organizations within the Washtenaw County Historic Commission Coalition would be notable awardees, and outstanding organizations could include nonprofits or businesses. Commissioner Oehrli asked for clarity about the awards and confirmation that no money was attached to the awards. Staff confirmed there are no monetary awards.
- Washtenaw County Updates
 - Staff presented updates. Chair Ralph asked for dates when the Board of Commissioners is doing its budget work.

Items for Consideration:

Staff presented the proposed HDC resolution of support for the historic district study for Groves Farm.

Vice Chair Jerome asked for questions. Chair Ralph asked to change the language from "established" to "evaluated."

- With that change in place, Commissioner Ralph moved the WCHDC adopt the HDC resolution of support for the historic district study for Groves Farm. Commissioner Mann seconded the motion. Vice Chair Jerome moved to vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Reports: (committees, other)

- None.

Items for Discussion:

- **Potential Projects:**

Staff presented information on HB5430, an amendment to the state's historic tax credit that could greatly benefit historic property owners. Staff encourages the HDC to support HB5430.

- **Commissioner Updates**

None.

Adjournment: Commissioner Clarke motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:29 pm. Commissioner Remensnyder seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

The next HDC meeting is scheduled for May 2, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. at Eastern County Government Center Office of Community & Economic Development 2nd floor 415 W. Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti, MI



WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

State of Michigan Legislature
735 E Michigan Ave
Lansing, MI 48912

May 2nd, 2024

RE: House Bill 5430

Dear State of Michigan Legislature:

At our regular meeting in May 2024, the WCHDC **unanimously** resolved to urge the Michigan Legislature to support Michigan House Bill 5430.

HB5430 represents a significant opportunity to continue the important work initiated by the Michigan Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HTC). The key provisions of HB 5430, such as increasing the credit cap to \$100 million, expanding eligibility criteria, and increasing the credit percentage for small income-producing and residential projects, are essential to addressing the needs of both large and small-scale preservation initiatives. The changes would positively impact homeowners, businesses, nonprofits, and the broader community.

Passage of HB 5430 is essential for preserving our state's rich architectural heritage and recognizes the unique role that preservation projects play in economic development, particularly in smaller towns and rural areas. These initiatives can stimulate local economies, create jobs, and promote sustainable growth that respects our past while building for the future.

Furthermore, the bill's emphasis on inclusivity, allowing participation from individuals, partnerships, corporations, non-profits, and other legal entities, ensures that a diverse range of stakeholders can benefit from the program.

The Washtenaw County Historic District Commission supports House Bill 5430 and urge legislatures to pass this important legislation. Thank you for your consideration of this worthy Bill.

Sincerely,

Alice J. Ralph
Washtenaw County Historic District Commission Chair

Washtenaw County Historic District Commission Staff Report

May 2, 2024

Items for Consideration by Commission

- **Groves Farm Study Committee:** The HDC must submit a list of nomination for the Study Committee. A minimum of 5 members is required with at least one from the relevant local historical society. Jennifer Delisle, the President of the Northfield Township Historical Society has agreed to serve as a member. Cheri Szcodronski, who completed the Groves Farm survey and NRHP nomination, has also agreed to serve as a member. The list of nominees will be presented to the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners for appointment.
- **Letter of Support for HB5430:** HB5430 was introduced to the State Legislature. This bill proposes numerous changes to the current, 2020, historic tax credit program. The proposed House Bill can be read in its entirety [here](#). A fact sheet, created by the Michigan Historic Preservation Network is available [here](#). A drafted letter is attached in the board packet.

Local Historic Districts

- **Affidavits:** Staff is currently working to submit affidavits to attach to the deed of the following properties: Wild-Frey Farm, Merriman Farm, Conant Farm, Popkins School, and Thornoaks.
- **Thornoaks legal:** No further update at this time. Siding installed at 4071 Thornoaks Drive is not in compliance with the COA issued in February 2022. The appeal of the decision is in circuit court, no hearing date has been set. A Motion for Expedited Review was submitted on October 31, 2023.
- **Merriman Farm:** The farm is currently for sale with an offer pending. Staff have communicated with the realtor and prospective buyer about projects they are interested in completing at the property.
- **Wild-Frey Farm:** The farm is currently for sale. Staff have communicated with the realtor and prospective buyers about owning an historic district property.
- **Thornoaks:** A property in Thornoaks was recently listed for sale. Staff have communicated with the realtor and sent an information packet for inclusion at the Open House.

Groves Farm

- Staff visited Groves Farm on April 23 to take updated photographs of the property and speak with the owner, Sally Louis, about the property's history. Sally provided numerous original photos and documentation for inclusion in the Study Committee Report. These documents have been scanned and placed in a folder.

Northfield Township MPDF CLG Grant

- Cheri Szcodronski has received comments back from all stakeholders on the MPDF form for Northfield Township and will be incorporating those and presenting revisions within the next few weeks.
- Four sites have been identified as National Register eligible and have agreed to participate in the process. Cheri will conduct site visits to St. John's, Zeeb Farm, Leland house, and German Park soon.

Ordinances updates

- Revisions to the Ordinances were made and are undergoing internal review prior to submission to Corporation Counsel. Following Corporation Counsel approval, Ordinance revisions will be presented to the HDC for resolution to recommend approval. They will then be submitted to the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners for review, approval, and adoption.

HDC Outreach Planning

- As part of the HDC's efforts to engage in public outreach as outlined in the 2024 HDC Goals, staff has adapted previous HDC awards programs.

- Language outlining award application procedures has been submitted for consideration as an attachment to the meeting packet.
- As part of this review, the HDC must determine a due date for award nominations.

Washtenaw County Updates

- Upcoming opportunities for outreach:
 - o [Michigan Historic Preservation Network Annual Conference](#): 5/9-5/11 in Kalamazoo
 - o Washtenaw County Historical Consortium meeting dates: 5/21, 8/20, 11/19
 - o Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners meetings: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays
 - o Washtenaw County Finance communicates the county's 4-year (quadrennial) budget at this site: <https://www.washtenaw.org/584/Open-Book>
- Washtenaw County has a membership to the [National Alliance of Preservation Commissions](#) (NAPC). Included in the membership are FREE webinars and online resources for staff and commissioners.

Respectfully submitted,

Kat Slocum, Staff to the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission
Washtenaw County Office of Community & Economic Development

2024 WCHDC Preservation Awards

The WCHDC will consider up to four (4) awards each year from one or more categories. Nominations should be submitted by . Awards will be presented .

AWARD CATEGORIES:

Outstanding Organization or Individual

This award is intended to recognize activities and achievements by historic preservation organizations or individual(s) who promote historic preservation throughout Washtenaw County.

Outstanding Business

Granted to a business that operates within Washtenaw County to recognize their outstanding achievements and excellence in protecting and preserving local cultural and historic heritage.

Outstanding Local Historic District Owner

This award is intended to recognize owners of Washtenaw County Local Historic Districts who achieve excellence in preservation activities on their property.

Outstanding Realtor

Awarded to a realtor who goes above and beyond to promote historic district properties and communicates openly and enthusiastically about local historic designation benefits.

Application:

A formal nomination packet for each awardee should include the following:

- A clear description of the activities and achievements involved.
- The name(s) and role(s) of persons and/or organizations nominated for the community preservation award.
- Explanation of how this activity is endorsed the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines (if applicable).
- Examples of the impact of this activity on the community or area.

Applications should be emailed to Kat Slocum, Washtenaw County Historic Preservation Specialist: slocumk@washtenaw.org